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# Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

**Summary record of the 389th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 28 March 2018, at 4 p.m.

*Chair*: Mr. Seck ..... (Senegal)

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process**

2. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that, faced with the recent illegal and provocative decision by the United States to move its embassy to Jerusalem, the Security Council had staunchly defended its resolutions concerning the legal status of Jerusalem, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). At the same time, the United States administration had cut its funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by more than 50 per cent, and stopped a $48 million programme that had provided food for people in the Gaza Strip. The United States administration had also decided to expedite the relocation of its embassy, which was now to occur on 14 May 2018. Those actions compounded the outrage of the Palestinian people; rather than showing sensitivity the current United States administration was showing a complete disregard for international law, resolutions of the Security Council and the policies of previous administrations.

3. Various conferences had been convened to try to address the financial crisis that UNRWA was facing. At a conference held in Rome, convened and co-chaired by Jordan, Sweden and Egypt and attended by the Secretary-General and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, various countries had pledged approximately $100 million towards bridging the agency's $446 million funding deficit. While that was a positive start, more money was needed for UNRWA to continue to provide all its services until the end of 2018. Other meetings had also been convened to deal with the dire economic situation of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including one held in Brussels, where pledges had been made amounting to approximately $550 million, representing 80 per cent of the funds needed to build a major desalination plant in the Gaza Strip, without which the area would be uninhabitable by 2020. The plant would meet the water needs of the people in Gaza through 2050.

4. The United States Government had convened another meeting, in Washington, D.C., with the stated aim of brainstorming on ways to ameliorate the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. However, bemused by such hypocrisy, the Palestinian leadership had not attended. The United States administration was expected to put forth proposals, but had not yet done so. Factors such as the corruption issues facing Prime Minister Netanyahu, and the logical refusal of the Palestinian leadership to engage with the United States administration if it continued to refuse to negotiate about Jerusalem and to deny money to UNRWA, might delay whatever the United States had in mind.

5. The manipulation of the political process over the past 20 years by the United States had not led to progress. The President of the State of Palestine had therefore proposed a collective approach, which would involve the convening of an international conference by mid-2018 to develop an international mechanism to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, to save the two-State solution and to create of an environment conducive to ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and establish the independence of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Council of Arab Ambassadors in New York had also been instructed to consult with all the members of the Security Council regarding that initiative and other proposals made by the President.

6. The consultations, which had just finished, had been built around three ways of investing in peace and saving the two-State solution. Firstly, the ambassadors had encouraged the Security Council to support the application by Palestine to become a State Member of the United Nations. Beginning in 2012, when the General Assembly had voted to recognize Palestine as an observer State, Palestine had been playing an increasingly larger role in international affairs: it had become a party to international treaties and conventions and was an active participant in various international bodies, for example by becoming a member of the Bureau of the Assembly of International Criminal Court. Currently, the prospect of achieving the two-State solution was remote and a single State with two separate systems, a form of apartheid, was the reality. Becoming a full State Member of the United Nations would increase the international recognition and leverage of Palestine and would therefore be an investment in peace and saving the two-State solution.

7. Secondly, the ambassadors had lobbied for the implementation Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), in which the Council which held that the Israeli settlements had no legal validity and constituted a major obstacle to peace, and stipulated that it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations. The Council had also recognized the principle of differentiation in paragraph 5 of the resolution by calling States to

distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

8. In his briefing to the Security Council on 26 March 2018 the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, had reported that there had been two important developments with regard to the principle of differentiation: the Danish parliament had adopted a resolution in which it invoked the principle in its dealings with Israel, and the European Commission had made some of its dealings with Israel conditional upon the principle of differentiation. He therefore encouraged Member States to report any distinctions made by their Governments between Israel proper and the Occupied Palestinian Territory in their dealings with Israel to the Secretary-General so that he would be compelled to acknowledge that the international community was complying with paragraph 5 of resolution 2334 (2016).

9. Lastly, the ambassadors had engaged with members of the Security Council on the matter of providing international protection to the civilian population until the Israeli occupation ended. In that connection, he urged the Security Council to consider ways of enhancing its involvement in the provision of such protection, in the light of the relevant compilation that had been prepared by the Secretary-General and transmitted to the Council at the latter's request. The ambassadors had completed the consultation process and were awaiting further instructions from their Governments.

10. The day that the United States was planning to move its embassy to Jerusalem, 14 May, was looming. All parties should take collective action to prevent it from happening and decide how they would respond to the illegal act if they failed to prevent it. With regard to the efforts by Israel to obtain a seat in the Security Council, Mr. Mladenov had reported that Israel was refusing to comply with the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016), and was in fact accelerating its construction of new settlements and openly rejecting the idea of differentiation. If the Security Council was to continue to be respected, such blatant disregard for one of its resolutions must surely disqualify Israel from becoming a member.

11. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that for decades the Palestinian people had suffered an unjust and constantly deteriorating situation, with their right to self-determination continually violated. However, the current situation was dramatic. Given its mandate, the Committee must take decisive steps to support the inalienable human rights of the Palestinian people, and must not remain passive in the face of the grave violation by the United States of resolutions of both the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Committee should be prepared to take a firm stance on the day that the United States relocated its embassy, and to publicly make clear the implications of such an act, including for the viability of the two-State solution.

12. Cuba supported the initiatives being taken by the League of Arab States, which demonstrated adherence to principles that united all Member States. Palestine should be granted full Member State status and Cuba was ready to provide support in any way it could.

13. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that recent developments, specifically recognition by the United States of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, moving of its embassy and cuts to UNRWA, were deeply concerning, as was the rising number of refugees, especially women and children. Indonesia remained committed to the two-State solution, although the prospect of achieving it was increasingly remote; it was the only good solution for the population of Palestine and should be urgently pursued. The Committee must push for full implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) in order to enhance the role of the Security Council in preventing further escalation of the conflict across the wider region.

**Report from the Rapporteur on the Committee visit to Uganda from 26 to 28 February 2018**

14. **Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan) said that he had been part of the Committee team that had conducted a visit to Uganda to mobilize support for the two-State solution and raise awareness of the situation of the Palestinian people and the mandate of the Committee. He was part of the team, which had also included the Chair of the Committee, the Rapporteur, the Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, the Ambassador of Indonesia to Palestine and the Ambassador of Cuba to Uganda. It had met with a number of high-level officials of the Government of Uganda and participated in an interactive discussion with faculty and students at Makerere University.

15. The team had informed the Ugandan authorities about the unique and principled human rights-focused mandate of the Committee and had drawn attention to the concrete proposal by President Abbas for collective action to salvage the two-State solution. In return, the authorities had informed the team that Uganda supported the work of the Committee, enjoyed excellent relations with both the State of Palestine and Israel and would continue to advocate a comprehensive two-State solution. Uganda believed that a future economically

stronger and more united Africa would be less susceptible to external pressures and thus better able to make a positive contribution to the situation. Civil society organizations had urged the Committee to examine the links between businesses and the Israeli occupation, mobilize civil society in the United States and Europe and involve the African Union and the European Union in efforts to achieve a solution. They had also asked how the Committee and the State of Palestine were dealing with tensions in the Arab region, stressed that the State of Palestine must respect and all the rights of its citizens, and suggested that the Committee should do more to raise awareness of the international law context of the question of Palestine and the Committee's advocacy activities in respect of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

**Consideration of upcoming Committee activities:**

*Committee visit to Panama*

16. **The Chair** said that a Committee the objective of the proposed visit to Panama would be to promote support for the two-State solution by the host Government, and to inform local public opinion about the two-State solution, the plight of the Palestinian people, as well as the mandate and role of the Committee. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed visit.

17. *It was so decided.*

*United Nations Forum on the question of Palestine to mark the seventieth anniversary of the 1948 War and the Nakba, to be held in New York on 17 and 18 May 2018*

18. **The Chair** drew the attention of the Committee to working paper No. 1, distributed by the Secretariat, which contained the provisional programme for the event. Entitled "70 years after 1948 — Lessons to Achieve a Sustainable Peace", the forum would mark 70 years since the withdrawal of British Mandate troops from Palestine and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel and the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war. It would highlight the need to address issues related to the 1948 war, the Nakba and refugees, in the context of the efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. On 16 May the Committee would hold a closed consultative meeting with civil society representatives, including from the States of Palestine and Israel, which Committee members and observers were encouraged to attend. As per Committee practice, the forum would be open to all Member States, observer States and organizations, and civil society actors.

19. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that since 2018 marked the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba, the Committee should ensure that the forum had a high profile, with the largest possible number of high-level government officials and civil society organizations in attendance. Entities including the Committee, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Group of Arab States, the Latin American and Caribbean Group and the African Group should all bear responsibility for ensuring that the Nakba and the tragedy of the Palestinian people were remembered in the most appropriate way.

20. The Palestinian Mission, in collaboration with the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights, was organizing a concert to take place in the General Assembly hall on 15 May, which would tell part of the history of the Palestinian people through music and poetry. The Mission was in the process of arranging for a well-known Palestinian band to perform. The cultural event would be a humble but important contribution from the international community, through which it would express solidarity with the Palestinian people and refugees, and appreciate the art and creativity of the Palestinian people.

21. **The Chair** took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the May 2018 forum, as contained in working paper No. 1.

22. *It was so decided.*

*International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be held in Rabat from 26 to 28 June 2018*

23. **The Chair** drew the attention of the Committee to working paper No. 2, distributed by the Secretariat, which contained the provisional programme for the event. The International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be organized jointly with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, would afford an opportunity for reflection on the question in the light of the 50-year occupation, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Oslo Accords and recent political developments. It would also provide a platform for youth from East Jerusalem to express their views, and efforts would be made to identify solutions to the many challenges they faced. Civil society organizations would also be able to engage in discussions with Member States and other organizations.

24. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that it would be important to make sure that the Conference was unique in its level of representation and discussion, since the current political situation meant

that many similar conferences were currently being organized.

25. **Mr. Atlassi** (Observer for Morocco) said that his country was pleased to host the conference as a sign of its unwavering and unconditional support for the Palestinian cause.

26. **The Chair** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the Conference.

27. *It was so decided.*

**Briefing by the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Representative Office, New York, on recent developments**

28. **Mr. Mulrean** (Director, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Representative Office, New York) said that UNRWA was a purely humanitarian mission with no political mandate. The Agency was taking steps to mitigate the effects of the financial crisis it was experiencing, which threatened its very existence. However, it would not be able to survive without additional support from the international community.

29. Cost-saving measures across all areas of operation had reduced the Agency's 2017 expenditure by approximately $81 million compared to what it would have been otherwise. However, the increasing needs of refugees and the unexpected 80 per cent cut in the contribution of the State that had been the Agency's largest donor meant that UNRWA had nonetheless been facing a significant shortfall at the start of 2018. A number of donor Governments had provided their contributions earlier in the year than usual, which had given UNRWA time to develop an emergency financing strategy.

30. The Agency was currently seeking individual contributions through its "Dignity is Priceless" campaign and working with the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank to develop new funding mechanisms. Pledges totalling approximately $100 million had been received from a number of States at an extraordinary ministerial conference held in Rome on 15 March 2018. However, the 2018 programme budget was still facing a projected shortfall of $173 million, and the emergency humanitarian appeals were woefully underfunded. The current projected income would allow UNRWA to keep its schools open until the end of the current academic year and maintain its other operations until summer 2018. Unless there was a significant collective response, UNRWA would then be forced to scale back or cease its activities.

31. UNRWA provided essential services to a refugee population with significant and growing needs. It was educating half a million children, providing health care for 3 million people and supplying food or cash for food to 1.7 million. In doing so, it gave hope and dignity to Palestinian refugees, which was helping to promote stability and combat extremism in the Middle East. Furthermore, most UNRWA staff were refugees, and their income was vital to the economic well-being of Palestine refugee communities, in particular in Gaza, where employment opportunities were scarce. The situation in Gaza, which was home to 1.2 million Palestinian refugees suffering the effects of 10 years of blockade, conflict, unemployment and limited access to electricity and drinking water, was of particular concern. The number of refugees in Gaza receiving food assistance had now reached 1 million, and UNRWA had had to develop programmes to address a psychosocial epidemic of mental health problems among adults and children. The cessation of the Agency's services would thus have a devastating human impact, place a heavy burden on host countries and present a serious risk of unrest.

32. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that there had been a very strong expression of support for Palestinian refugees and UNRWA at the extraordinary ministerial conference held in Rome. His delegation welcomed the pledges that had been made and urged other Member States to make contributions as well. The Committee might wish to consider further ways to collaborate with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as that partnership had been instrumental in the progress that had been made towards the establishment of a waqf for Palestine refugees administered by the Islamic Development Bank. It might also be useful to organize a conference, in collaboration with other organizations, to explore other ways to support UNRWA.

33. **The Chair** said that long-term solutions must be found, as it would be very difficult for UNRWA to operate on the basis of voluntary contributions indefinitely. Only a well-funded waqf would allow UNRWA to avoid endless financial stress. The Committee should also make the most of its visits to South America to raise awareness of the situation among the large, wealthy and generous Palestinian communities there and encourage them to contribute to the Agency.

34. **Mr. Mulrean** (Director, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(UNRWA) Representative Office, New York) said that the new World Bank trust fund for UNRWA would be launched soon. Good progress was also being made towards the establishment of a waqf for UNRWA, which had the full support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank.

**Updates from Member States on their activities related to the question of Palestine**

35. **Mr. Reyes Hernández** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation welcomed the Committee's planned activities. His Government continued to support the search for a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Palestinian question on the basis of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace with Israel within secure and recognized borders.

36. Since the Committee's last meeting, his Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the State of Palestine, which covered areas such as education, health care, agriculture, construction, investment in the real estate and hospitality sectors, aviation, engineering, the environment, water and energy. A number of government officials from his country and the State of Palestine had made public statements reaffirming their countries' unreserved support for one another. On 14 March 2018, the Autar Palestinian Cultural Centre in Nablus, State of Palestine, had held an event to honour the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its support and solidarity. The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had publicly condemned the terrorist attack targeting the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine in the Gaza Strip in March 2018. A Venezuelan delegation had also expressed the country's firm support for the cause of the Palestinian people at the meeting of the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, held in Geneva on 20 March 2018.

*The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.*